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ABSTRACT

Major cultural differences impeded the smooth transfer of a 14 day management education program, which had been very successfully used in Western settings, to an Asian situation. Thirteen Chinese and two Caucasians, all of whom worked in Southeast Asia and had management degrees, attended the program to improve their skills in influencing those with whom they worked. The Positive Power and Influence Program, described in the first section of the publication, has a conceptual base that distinguishes discrete kinds of behavior for influencing others. Ten erroneous assumptions underlying the trainers' behavior include the following: trainers need not have lived in Asia; Asians who attended a training workshop will operate optimally; teasing is a put-down; average second-language competency in English is sufficient; things are more or less as they seem; and a sensitive trainer will always be aware of conflict. Also examined are nine erroneous assumptions underlying the management training model. For example, role-playing is a universally useful learning method; tangible achievements are what matters; and learning is an individual matter and it is optimized when tailored to the individual and when it springs from his or her own felt needs.
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***Using a Western Learning Model
in Asia: A Case Study***

by: Reginald Smart

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF AFS INTERNATIONAL

AFS volunteers and professional staff throughout the world are moving towards the goal of peace by stimulating an awareness of mankind's common humanity, a wider understanding of the diverse cultures of the world, and a concern for the global issues confronting society. They acknowledge that peace is a dynamic concept threatened by injustices both between and within nations.

In pursuit of this goal, the core of the AFS experience has been the promotion of relationships in which families, communities, groups and maturing young persons from different cultural backgrounds share new learning situations related to the purposes of AFS. In addition, through experience and experimentation, AFS has developed and continues to encourage new models and opportunities for exchange that will be beneficial for the development of society.

AFS does not affiliate with any religious, political or partisan group, but it believes in the value of participating in a continuous process of interaction between cultures both across and within boundaries.

AFS encourages all participants to involve themselves in situations in which they can apply and project their AFS experience.

INTRODUCTION

Many of you know that we who edit and manage the *Occasional Papers in Intercultural Learning* are the same people who carry out an extensive program of research and evaluation for AFS International. And it is as researchers that we are pleased to announce that our massive Impact Study -- a five-year effort designed to document the influence of an intercultural homestay on the personal development of young people -- is beginning to bear fruit. Our early computer runs of data collected from nearly 1300 students (including a comparison group) demonstrate that several indicators of awareness and learning show significantly greater gains for students with an AFS experience than could be expected from maturation alone. Our first major public presentation of our findings will occur at the conference of the Société éducative de visites et d'échanges au Canada (SEVEC) at the Quebec Hilton, October 23-25, 1983. The conference theme is *La valeur des échanges . . . une appréciation concrète* (Exchanges . . . assessing their value). For more information about this conference, write to Mr. A.D.S. MacKay, SEVEC, 1580 chemin Merivale Road, Bureau 505, Ottawa, Ontario K2G 4B5, Canada.

The author of this fourth number of the *Occasional Papers* is Dr. Reginald Smart, an intercultural and interpersonal consultant from Tahmoor, New South Wales, Australia. Dr. Smart has had extensive experience in cross-cultural and managerial training, and his work has taken him to many corners of the globe. (He will be moving permanently to Southern California later this year.) AFS old-timers may recall that Dr. Smart authored a little blue volume published by "AFS International Scholarships" back in 1968; its title was *Global Village Conversation: Bridges and Barriers to Communication between Persons of Different Cultures*, and copies of it are still available. In that booklet, Dr. Smart argued that the greatest barrier to intercultural communication is personal insecurity. We think that the article by Dr. Smart presented in this number of the *Occasional Papers* is an ideal piece for reminding all of us in this Western-oriented field that we must continually check and re-check our methods, our procedures, our models, and, most importantly, our *assumptions* whenever we work outside the European-North American context.

USING A WESTERN LEARNING MODEL IN ASIA:

A CASE STUDY

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This case study is motivated by the nagging doubt that the use of Western learning models might be less effective in the non-Western world than the politeness and ambition of trainees in non-Western countries would sometimes lead us to believe. It is further motivated by my memory that twenty years ago in Singapore I was puzzled by the failure of several Singaporeans to use most of the knowledge and perspectives they had gained from graduate work abroad. At last I have some clues.

The expansion of management education to the Third World is happening apace. Enterprising Western trainers who see this as a new market and offer short courses for established managers are received enthusiastically by native company officials who want the competitive advantage of "knowing the latest." The indigenous managers who enroll seem so like any other group of managers that intercultural problems are easily overlooked -- to the trainers' regret! Studies of successful non-Western managers that do exist suggest that they have the same values as their Western counterparts: that's why they made it. So it seems easy to justify the assumption that what works well in a Western setting will prove to be an effective learning model in an Asian, Arab, African, or Latin setting. And when trainees amicably go along with our methods and materials, we tend to accept their conformity with relief. After all, there's enough to do without looking for problems.

The program analysed here was run in Singapore, during four intense days, to improve upper-level managers' skills in influencing those with whom they work -- subordinates, peers, and superiors. It attracted divisional, plant, sales, production, and other managers from such large companies as Shell, Goodyear, and IBM. All 22 participants (including 13 ethnic Chinese and 2 Caucasians) had worked in various parts of South East Asia, and all had management degrees. There were two trainers. One (the writer) was an Australian who had lived in Singapore during 1955-1957. The other was a New Zealander who had worked in Europe and had long experience in management training, but who had no Asian experience. The training model, "The Positive Power and Influence Program," was taught under licence from Situation Management Systems of Plymouth, Massachusetts; originally developed in Europe, it never had been used in the Third World.

At the conclusion of the program everyone reported feeling good about the time, effort, and money invested in the program, and all were keen to recommend it to others. Therefore, this is not a post-mortem on a failure, but on a success.

A COMMON-SENSE DESCRIPTION OF WHAT HAPPENED

The Positive Power and Influence Program (which had proved to be a very successful model in Western settings) has a conceptual base that distinguishes ten discrete kinds of "behaviour" for influencing others. These are organized under four "styles" (as summarized in the box). The styles and their associated behaviours are all understood to be ways of influencing others through the use of personal (as opposed to positional) power.

Summary of the four "styles" and ten "behaviours" of The Positive Power and Influence Program:

- I. Bridging (the least direct style)
 - 1. Involving and Supporting
 - 2. Active Listening
 - 3. Disclosing
- II. Rational Persuasion (the least emotional style)
 - 1. Making Proposals
 - 2. Supportive Reasoning
- III. Assertion (an emotional style emphasizing "push")
 - 1. Stating Expectations
 - 2. Evaluating
 - 3. Using the "Carrot" or "Stick"
- IV. Visioning (an emotional style emphasizing "pull")
 - 1. Finding a Common Ground
 - 2. Creating a Vision of What Might Be

In advance of the program, the participants were required to solicit an assessment by peers, superiors, and subordinates of their (the participants') usage of these behaviours, and to carry out the same assessment on themselves. The patterns and ranges disclosed by this preprogram work were as varied as with any Western group, suggesting that the instrument was useful in the Asian context as a

conveyor of many "messages" and that it was a reliable indicator (in a general way adequate for teaching purposes) of the frequency with which an individual uses each behaviour.

During *Day One* the structure and flow of the entire program was carefully explained so that the participants would know what to expect and how the parts would contribute to the objective of making them personally more powerful. In addition, each trainee introduced himself and described his management responsibilities and need for increasing his effectiveness in influencing others. As leaders, we were careful to learn preferred names and to pronounce them as their owners did. The time taken for personal introductions was justified in our minds by two considerations: First, we wished the trainees to know that we were concerned with their growth as individuals. Second, we knew that the program's success depends heavily upon the respectful, open interaction between group members.

Preprogram assessments were checked later during the first day, and exercises were conducted to help the trainees refine their understanding of the ten behaviours and of the reasons why some work better than others in certain business situations. The exercises were recorded so that the trainees could tally specific types of behaviour. We noted that this extensive new data about the trainees' personal styles and probable effectiveness seemed to be taken less seriously -- or at any rate, less analytically -- than by previous Western trainees.

Because this first day had been paced much more slowly than it would have been with a Western group, we expected that the model would have been internalised to the point where recognition of the different behaviours would be almost automatic. An anonymous self-assessment of the trainees' level of understanding produced an average score of 4.4 on a scale of 5. However, we had been seriously misled; one-and-a-half days later more than half the group grasped the opportunity to replay tapes demonstrating the various behaviours over and over again.

Day Two was primarily given to exploring styles that were little used by individual trainees. We challenged them to explore how much effort it would take to improve their weaker style(s). This exploration occurred after extensive group and individual guidance. Then, in groups of three to six, participants took turns using exclusively the style being explored to influence another person in a hypothetical situation (selected from among numerous available options). Considerable time was devoted to helping individual trainees decide what would be involved in overcoming blocks they encountered in trying to use an unfamiliar style. By day's end they knew which styles could be markedly improved with practice.

Day Three was spent practising the styles with potential for improvement, with attention being given to overcoming inner blockages to particular behaviours. (This activity spilled over into the first two hours of *Day Four*.) To accomplish these ends, each participant had to

identify his own learning goals, then independently convene persons with the same goal to share one of the 30 or more learning experiences that were available to them. Very few seemed to take the initiative required to make full use of this opportunity. Most seemed to go along good-naturedly with anyone who had real drive, then to laze around for the remainder of the period. We trainers were loath to push, believing that some conscious and some unconscious examination of the previous experiences was taking place. Only later did it become apparent that many had no real personal stake in what is the heart (and, from a Western perspective, the genius) of this learning design, and were thus abrogating the use of this self-directed mode of learning.

Throughout this part of the program, two expectations frequently were *unmet*. The first was that participants would be "real" in role-plans -- which they generally referred to as "games." Rather than "lose" themselves and identify almost completely with the manager described in the briefing material, many simply hammed it up with no introjection of the role and, concomitantly, with no reinforcement of new, desirable behaviours. The second *unmet* expectation was that participants would make the decision (normal among Westerners) to change "me." However, not only was the analysis of internal blockages to certain behaviours a novel demand, but in addition it seemed quite an unacceptable one. The materials contained extensive, down-to-earth examples of behaviours that are counter-productive; they also contained profound yet simple diagrams of the circular processes by which undesired forms of behaviour tend to be reinforced. Among Western trainees, these always stimulate discussion and the decision on the part of many to "work on changing themselves." But only 2 of our 22 trainees in Singapore made such a decision. For the writer, these occurrences brought a realisation of the complex of assumptions that surround the use of the experiential learning design.

Day Four was the time of maximum personal investment. During the last four or five hours, each participant is supposed to analyse the real-life influence situation that most troubles him, then coach another to role-play the "target person" with whom he often experiences an impasse. The comments of a third-party observer as well as the several strategies attempted in the role-play are recorded; the tape goes home with the participant, whose continued learning of new styles and behaviours then goes into the "Real" phase. This replaying of a real-life situation is nearly always a great success; inevitably, it brings a "high" for Western trainees. However, my colleague and I in Singapore were greatly disappointed because of the insistence of many trainees that they would only work on *imaginary* (that is, pretend) situations. The process was further frustrated by the reluctance of participants to analyse motives (even with two "friends") and to dream up other scenarios (that is, to think laterally).

The anonymous evaluations completed at the close of Day Four as well as the personal farewells between participants and trainers left a strong impression that participants had learned a great deal and had

valued this experience more than any other management training programs they had previously completed. Two very Westernised Asians who privately levelled with us insisted that the evaluations were more than face-saving -- in short, that they were genuinely positive. Our private assessment was that this hadn't been the best group we'd worked with, but certainly wasn't the worst. Considering that it was the first group of trainees in Asia to use The Positive Power and Influence Program, the four days had been much more successful than we honestly had expected.

A NOT-SO-COMMON-SENSE ANALYSIS OF WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

In retrospect, there appear several major cultural differences that impeded the smooth transfer of this Western learning model to an Asian situation. These differences will be expressed below in terms of nineteen erroneous assumptions made by us experienced trainers. Only later did we realise their influence on our behaviour. These assumptions were made *in spite of* our knowing the culture -- because everything seemed to be going so well. Our erroneous assumptions are discussed below in two groups:

- Erroneous assumptions underlying our behaviour as trainers
- Erroneous assumptions underlying our model of management training

ERRONEOUS ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING OUR BEHAVIOUR AS TRAINERS

1. *Trainers need not have lived in Asia.* We did not allow for the extent to which culture shock enervates. According to Craig (1979), "An expatriate's first experience in an Asian culture is likely to be devastating." She found that one's first extensive interpersonal contact with members of Asian cultures in their home environment produces severe levels of stress that seriously detract from optimal performance. Because the habitual decoding of signals doesn't work, the newcomer is pushed to think about every signal; the resultant overload produces the same physical and psychic responses as result from major physical trauma. Craig's study showed that while newcomers' culture shock was rated as "severe," persons who had previously lived anywhere in Asia were rated only as "mild" to "moderate." These are important considerations in selecting trainers to implement any learning program in Asia.

2. *Asians who attend a training workshop will operate optimally.* As expatriate trainers we knew that we were working harder than usual -- to find the right word, the right approach, to hear accurately and to understand. We expected that the trainees would, like us, be suffering some culture shock because we had set up a very special culture (learning environment) in the mirrored ballroom of an island hotel. (The

creation of a special culture is part of any "classroom," and this was very consciously built into the training design we were using.) We were pressing for everyone to adapt to this unusual culture that we had created; we were depending on them to help make our learning model a success. And we were aware that many of the trainees were continually demonstrating exactly that insecurity about "what goes" that characterises culture shock. Our mistake was to not give up our expectation that the effect of that insecurity would be to stimulate, not impede, their learning.

3. *Teasing is a put-down.* I really relaxed when several of the participants started to tease me, but my colleague from New Zealand felt their teasing was a form of criticism. I knew that teasing connotes affection among Singaporean Chinese, but can be very disconcerting to Westerners, especially Americans. When a participant playfully implied criticism or suggested that we had been "robbed" by a shopkeeper, he was giving us a clear expression of acceptance and affection. It certainly was *not* a cause for defensiveness, anxiety, or the feeling of being rejected.

4. *Average second-language competency in English is sufficient.* We had not expected complications from participants who had written clear letters related to their attendance -- but we were mistaken. The training design we were using depended upon the exact meaning of behaviours and words. All exercises required precise use of language and clear feedback regarding the way in which verbal and non-verbal signals were being interpreted. Furthermore, the exercises required quick interaction in bargaining and arguing, perfect comprehension of instructions, and quick mastery of case descriptions as well as of one of the roles within that case. In reading, speaking, and listening, the issues so often lay within fine points of meaning that we came to believe that *complete fluency* in English should have been a stated prerequisite for participation in our workshop.

5. *Things are more or less as they seem.* Westerners assume that the significance lies on the face of what is stated, and that one asks for information because he really wants to know. But Asians tend to ask themselves, "Why is he, a professor, asking me, a student? Does he do it to let me earn respect from my peers? Or does he do it (unnecessarily) to make *him* seem more knowledgeable in contrast to my ignorance, or to underline the fact that *he* is the one to be respected?" In this program, what unintended messages were we believed by the trainees to be sending? What messages were we intended to hear, but could not because (all our human relations training notwithstanding) we remained essentially *literalists*? We wondered whether it would have paid to have present an "informant" who could have provided us privately with feedback on all interactions with the trainees.

6. *A sensitive trainer will always be aware of conflict.* Conflict within a person (over ideas) or between persons (over ends or means) is not feared by Western trainers. Conflict is seen to hold the potential

for intrapersonal growth or for new experiences that will use interpersonal differences to liven up a lethargic situation. But the Asian preference for respect and harmony makes both of these techniques highly questionable and the camouflage of conflict mandatory. The result is a serious problem for the Western trainer. For when we check for confusion and problems in the learning process, we look for signs of intrapersonal stress. But the lack of these in an Asian (who strives to maintain a peaceful, pleasant exterior) does not necessarily signify agreement or understanding. The trainer must find ways to answer this question: Is there any conflict that we are not being allowed to see?

7. *"Yes" means "yes" and "It's best to tell it like it is."* The Bible says "Let your yea be yea and your nay be nay," and with liberal variations that dictum governs Western behaviour. But when Asians say "yes" they sometimes mean "I hear what you are saying but I don't necessarily agree!" An Asian's "yes" may mean "yes," "no," or "maybe." Furthermore, an untruth is not considered by them as serious as is making the other person lose face or feel unhappy. In Asia, it is always more polite to say "yes" than "no." Loss of face also occurs when one causes another to feel embarrassed, humiliated, or inferior -- all of which probably occur when a trainer uses a direct approach to correct or improve another person's performance! A further complication is that Westerners usually get no more indirect with one another than to consider what the other's reaction will be to a statement. But concern for face can easily cause an Asian to ask whether the questioner will lose face by the position he will feel himself to occupy if I give a disappointing answer. Finally, it is also noteworthy that the results of the assessments made by the trainees' colleagues indicated that for only two of the ten behaviours did the assessments differ substantially from the middle-of-the-scale (face-saving) response. These two indicated a much *less* frequent use of threats as a means of influence, and a much *more* frequent use of generating a shared identity. Both of these express a concern on the part of the assessors not to cause their colleagues (our trainees) to lose face.

8. *An "easy" personal style will "relax" them.* For Americans, Australians, and some other Westerners, easy familiarity is a natural way to indicate friendliness, and so it seems wise for trainers to adopt a casual mode of dress and style of presentation. Yet it is likely that we had to be forgiven at the outset for what would be seen locally as our *lack* of grace and manners. South East Asians feel badly for a person in authority who has lost face, especially if he doesn't even realise it. Indeed, the more it is unrealised, the worse they feel for you. What many Western trainees consider our greatest strength actually created a real problem for our Asian trainees. A considerate authoritarian style would have paid much greater dividends.

9. *Sensitive Asians will be good "active listeners."* The active listening exercises proved to be the most difficult (although useful) for most of the participants. Feeding back statements in acceptably

paraphrased form has proved difficult for Western trainees, but for Asians to openly describe another person's feelings was even more difficult. I checked out a hunch and was able to substantiate it: Asians probably listen as carefully as, and perceive perhaps better than, Westerners. But it is very alien behaviour for them to express their reception of a message in passive words. It may be that their style of teasing (noted above) combines with their competence in rational debate (derived from a traditional European-style education) to produce humourously judgemental responses to friends, while "enemies" are treated with respectful agreement and unemotional discussion. This would help explain their initial hesitance to make any response to a new associate in an exercise situation. When we prodded them to produce the required Western-style response, they blurted out some sort of rejoinder that was against their better judgement and left them feeling very uncomfortable.

10. *Personal disclosure conflicts with the value Asians place on privacy.* This assumption was proven quite wrong by the scores given in the preworkshop assessment; Asians were shown to be identical to Americans with respect to this behaviour. Subsequent events in the workshop substantiated this finding. Chinese, Malays, and Filipinos all found the exercise on disclosure of feelings to be very useful, especially in its demand that in various ways they express their own weaknesses. It is no exaggeration to say that they did this more genuinely and enthusiastically than Australian groups do. Why? Why could they personally disclose more easily than they could actively listen? Perhaps it was because personal disclosure required them to overcome one value -- privacy -- in the interests of several other values: respect for us as visitors and teachers, desire for harmony, and need to save their face as well as ours. The balance easily tipped towards expressing what was already in their consciousnesses. Active listening, by contrast, demanded responses that did not readily come to mind.

ERRONEOUS ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING OUR MODEL OF MANAGEMENT TRAINING

1. *The ten-behaviour model covers the main influence styles; cultural differences will be covered by variations in stress on particular ones.* In Asian terms, the model we were using takes little account of the need to get one's target to respect oneself. Westerners who have failed in negotiations with Asians usually identify as one problem their own haste to get an agreement. What they have seen as "dallying" is not because time does not matter; it is because it takes time to establish relationships. In Asia, terms will depend upon the quality of respect on both sides. The first meeting may well be "only social"; what we would call "real negotiations" need not start until the third. (I recall how negotiations with one elite Tuscan group took two years and included a special concert in a Renaissance palace that we had to give to establish credibility!) Indirect influence is another major

style in status-oriented societies like Singapore. "Whom does he know?" and "Whom will I please or annoy if I please or annoy him?" are often the *major* determinants of decisions. As a result, "influence behaviour" might consist primarily of trying to learn whom the target knows. The other's status within the community is sought as a clue to the consequences of a decision. While this is true to some extent everywhere, in Singapore and other status-oriented societies such a consideration can outweigh all others. A third style occurs partly because of the difficulty of learning such things face-to-face with one's target. Asians therefore often avoid or disengage from their target in order to "fight another day." The Positive Power and Influence Program has since been amended to include "Moving Away" as a fifth major style. The absence of these three indirect styles in our model certainly must have raised doubts in the minds of our trainees about its applicability. Little wonder that even the promise that "mastery of these styles could enable you to beat Americans at their own game" did not prove incentive enough for several.

2. *The key values to which one can appeal -- the "currencies" of personal influence -- are universal.* When you have no financial or positional levers, to what can you appeal in your target person? A good bet is that Westerners would include the need for the target person to feel heightened *self-esteem*. The influencer expresses this by active listening, by praise for accomplishments, and by acknowledging the target's autonomy and freedom. Indeed, these were seen as basic values by us trainers. But not by our trainees. Such currencies were rated highly by less than 20% of these Asians, whereas more than half of them identified their own top personal currencies as behaviours that merited the respect, understanding, trust, and confidence of the target person. And in Asians' terms (as I suggested previously), none of these could be won in minutes, hours, or even four days. It proved very hard to make the radical transition of appealing to *their* values, rather than to our most basic ones; yet, ironically, we were there to teach them that you influence only in terms of the *other's* currencies!

3. *Role-playing is a universally useful learning method.* So widespread has the role-playing technique become that Westerners simply don't consider the numerous assumptions on which it is based. So when experientially oriented trainers use it as a learning procedure, we expect a certain minimal degree of identification with the role. But what was happening as Asian after Asian "hammed it up" to the great appreciation of the group? Clearly they weren't practising a new behaviour in such a way as to begin its establishment as a habit. Clearly they weren't experiencing feelings not customary, but now sensed almost as their own. Clearly they weren't putting their own emotional strength into ideas and phrases that were new to them. And clearly they weren't attaching new phrases to old feelings that previously had found only unproductive expression. We assume all these things *will* happen in a role-play -- and without coaching they do occur with the vast majority of Western trainees. But they occurred with only a small minority of these Asians. Perhaps the reason was because

their very concretised "self" is not easily injected into an alien context; this in turn may be because it is a self only known in a familiar context, one in which there is exceptional stress placed on group approval. I am still wondering whether there is any way to introduce role-playing that would free Asians to take on new qualities experimentally and seriously, in a realistic fashion.

4. *Participants can identify and role-play varied responses to their own real-life situations.* The range of responses to this challenge varied greatly -- from one trainee who headed straight for me to role-play his target, to another who claimed he always influences his targets in whatever direction he desires. The most worrisome trainees came between these two extremes and chose to work on fictitious situations. By so doing they abrogated much of the value of the program, and certainly reduced its transference to real life (which is, after all, the point of all training). Even allowing for possible blockages to role-playing, why did so many refuse to deal with a real situation, even through the stages of guided analysis? Were they unwilling to acknowledge any difficulties? Fearful that the influence target would hear of the strategy discussions? (This possibility was most unlikely, given the level of confidentiality expressed repeatedly.) While such factors almost certainly were at work, I suspect that more important was a combination of several deeper factors alluded to above -- scepticism about the notion of personal change, lack of commitment to change oneself, no real sharing of the Western concept of the individual, the potential loss of respect among fellow trainees upon disclosure of "real-life" shortcomings, and some disbelief that the ten behaviours we were working with constituted an exhaustive list of influence styles.

5. *The sky's the limit if you are determined.* Most Western participants report that this program motivates them to work and learn at an unprecedented pace. In assuming that it would similarly inspire and motivate Asians, we not only ignored the incongruity of our individualistic assumptions, but also the pervasive influence of the concept of fate. These Asian tendencies are well illustrated in the bargaining behaviour of a typical Chinese entrepreneur: He enters the situation with vigour, makes outrageous claims and offers, and seems to be using every ounce of his energy to get the best deal. But so long as the process is exciting and follows the rules of the game (for instance, is not taken too seriously), he accepts the outcome. The Westerner who fails to profit as much as he expected to invariably says, "I really should have said" Is it that one believes that the outcome was foreordained while the other believed that it was in his power to completely control the situation? Maybe there is more fatalism concerning *their own capacities* among upwardly mobile Asian managers than their successes might lead us to expect.

6. *Tangible achievements are what matters.* While Western planners and pedagogues clearly are goal-oriented and usually have plans with precise performance objectives, the bargaining example exemplifies another Asian orientation to behaviour: It's not whether you win that counts,

it's how you play the game. One cannot contrast the trainers' intensity with the participants' smiling agreement without being struck by the aptness of one writer's comment that the core of Malay values is *budi* -- "respect and courtesy . . . a pleasing disposition, and peace and harmony in the family, neighborhood, and society as a whole." The result in the individual is "a responsibility to show courtesy in word, deed, and action to all people at all times." (Craig, 1979) Little wonder that Asians place respect and consideration at the top of their listing of currencies to which personal appeal can be made. Little wonder that our Western achievement orientation was sometimes frustrated.

7. *Learning is an individual matter; it is optimised when tailored to the individual and when it springs from his or her own felt needs.* The self-directed learning mode, based on self-assessment and an individual learning plan, is an example of this assumption put into practice. But Asians seem not to share this assumption. For in spite of very high levels of academic achievement and vocational success, our Asian trainees showed less ability to learn autonomously than do their Western counterparts who complete this course. The Asians showed much less initiative; only three or four pursued their own goals in the face of invitations from friends to "come and do this exercise with us." Given the importance of group acceptance, it is not really surprising that they decided to work with their friends and thereby lost the opportunity to attempt our personalised challenges. Why? Because while we assume that learning comes chiefly from personal experience, they believe that it is derived chiefly from the wisdom and knowledge of others. Hence one evaluation comment: "I expected to get more than I did from one of the trainers who had such high credentials."

8. *Individual responses to the trainer and the training design provide the on-site motivation necessary for trainees to perform well.* We rarely consider how much we rely on inner forces in individual trainees to help create a good group learning climate in which "the process" can take off. In trying to establish an internal system of social control, my colleague and I completely ignored their custom of conforming to the external pressures of the group's standards. We focused on individual assessments, individual needs, and individual barriers to learning. Asians are more likely to respond to peer pressure and to unseen but dominant reference groups, whose opinions count for them at least as much as a self-assessment does for us.

9. *It is both desirable and possible to change "me."* Especially in the United States, a cult of change has developed -- for its own sake as well as for pragmatic reasons. The value of change permeates learning models of every conceivable variety, and is so basic to marketing all educational opportunities (from personal growth groups to Ph.D. degrees) that it is hardly ever thought about. Yet the idea of changing "me" rests on not one but two major assumptions: (1) that there is an individualistic self ("me"), and (2) that it is possible to know the dynamics within that self, and therefore how to modify those dynamics.

For most non-Westerners, however, it is very difficult to conceive of any personal reality apart from those persons who are close and important. One's existence starts with the group, and without that group the "I" has no existence. Furthermore, non-Westerners cannot conceive of the self as an abstract reality that can be separated from specific roles in concrete situations. The theory of the self as we use it seems to stem from Plato's notion that ideas are what is real, rather than their manifestations. And while many of us might reject Platonism, we nevertheless act as though our theories and concepts are the most important and real things in the world. It is even stranger to many Asians that we claim to know about the abstract self and even claim to have developed extensive knowledge about it, which we call "psychology." While living in the United States, I noticed that it was unexceptional for an eight-year-old to "explain" behaviour. ("Oh, that's just her inferiority complex.") By contrast, the average Australian adult rarely explains behaviour; he just reacts to it. Even Australian pedagogues give more weight to philosophical, theoretical, and pragmatic elements of learning design than to psychological ones. Thinking back to my four days in Singapore, I doubt whether our "psychological facts" (in the form of both assumptions and analyses) had enough reality for most of our Asian trainees to be taken seriously by them.

SO WHAT?

Let me make quite clear that my colleague and I were experienced training professionals, and that both of us were culturally aware. If we have made such assumptions, so have others. We who train across cultural lines err not because we don't know about the other culture, but *because we don't ask what our OWN assumptions are regarding*

- our interpersonal styles,
- our learning models.

Even when we have examined our assumptions, it is still necessary to be brutal with ourselves in asking whether the transfer-of-training problem demands

- modification of our personal style as trainers,
- modification of our learning model,
- modification of both
- basic redesign of our entire program -- beginning with its assumptions.

The fault, Dear Educator, lies in ourselves and in our models. The better the model, the more likely we are to depend upon it and to assume its transferability, not thinking of its precise cultural applicability as the reason for our model's excellence. And when "they" actually request Western-style training, we are completely confident.

But the outcome of that training in the non-Western context depends on whether we as trainers have the wit and the will to do it *right*. The wit can tell us what should be done, and what to watch for: cultural knowledge we *do not lack*. The will is another story: it means trying harder to be wise *before* the event; it means field testing; it can even mean discarding a beautiful design.

Do I mean that we must usually create new models? Do I suggest that we can *never* transfer an old, gold one? At the moment, no. Because many non-Westerners feel a little amused superiority towards expatriates in their countries. So long as we aren't arrogant and do make some real effort, they have such large reserves of good-will and good humor that they will bend over backwards to forgive our worst blunders and to make us feel good about ourselves and them. And all with a wonderful chuckle or smile. After all, it was a devout Moslem who said, "It will all work out . . . if Allah wills . . .," and then added, "with a little push."

Thanks to the insularity of many who lack both the wit and will to be cross-culturally sensitive (the "colonial dodos"), the competition is very poor in the management training field just now. Any of us with that wit and will can expect applause as we use a little sensitivity in transferring our favourite golden oldie to another culture. But when the competition sharpens . . . ?

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